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STATE FOR EAP/CM - JON HABJAN
STATE FOR OES/OMC - DIEDRE WARNER-KRAMER
NOAA/NMFS FOR REBECCA LENT

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EFIS](#) [SENV](#) [OTRA](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: CHINESE COMMENTS ON NGOS'SWORDFISH PETITION

REFTEL: A) STATE 17673 B) STATE 16255

¶1. (U) As requested in REFTELS, Post transmitted on February 23 the text of the letter from Assistant Administrator for Fisheries Jim Balsiger, inviting the Bureau of Fisheries at the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture to comment on a recent petition by two NGO groups concerning swordfish fisheries.

¶2. (U) On March 12, Mr. LIU Xiaobing, from the International Cooperation Office at the Bureau of Fisheries responded with the following written comments:

BEGIN ACTUAL TEXT:

Swordfish is an oceanic pelagic species, mostly caught by shallow longline fishing gear operating around islands, and also the bycatch species of deep longline operating in the high seas. In addition, some recreational fishery also targeted or incidentally caught the fish.

In fact, fishery data has shown that swordfish fishery could result in the mortality of sea turtle and other marine protected species. Most mortality of sea turtles may (be) attributed to shallow longline fishing. But it should be noted that the situation is improving and sea turtle mortality is reducing due to conservation measures implemented:

--Regional Fishery Management Organizations have adopted resolution concerning with sea turtle issues.

--Technical measures such as circle hooks, dehooker equipment etc have been adopted by fishery step by step, consequently reducing the incidental catch of sea turtles.

--Fishermen for swordfish are well informed and trained for conservation of sea turtles.

According to scientific observer data, there are no interaction between swordfish fishery and marine mammals. It is indicated that zero mortality of marine mammals appeared at swordfish fishery. We believe that implementation of more mitigation measure of bycatch by fishery should be more effective to protect sea turtles and other protected species compared with trade banning.

END TEXT

¶3. (U) Post will forward a scanned image of the original paper by email to Dr. Rebecca Lent at NOAA/NMFS, the POC listed in REFTEL.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Judging from the comments provided above, it is clear that the Bureau of Fisheries remains sensitive to the prospect of any ban on fish exports to the United States that is being

proposed in the name of reducing bycatch of protected living marine resources (PLMRs). With China having been identified in January 2009 as an IUU fishing country under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and with the clock on the two-year consultation period before formal certification having begun, China will lose no opportunity to register its view that appropriate and sufficient measures to protect PLMRs are already being taken, and that China will continue to oppose measures it views to be potentially trade protectionist.

END COMMENT

WEINSTEIN